1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
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thus been slain about seventy years earlier. It appears that attempts were commonly made to kill chiefs by means of sympathetic magic, and it is quite possible that such attempts, becoming known, preyed upon the minds of the victims to such an extent that death resulted.

WEALTH

Since wealth is so important in chieftainship, it would be desirable at this point to consider the concepts of wealth. Unfortunately, it is impossible to give a satisfactory treatment of this subject. The coming of the white man altered the economic aspects of Bella Coola life so radically, and at such an early period, that concrete examples of economic interdependence, so useful in a thorough study, could not be obtained in the field. It is possible that greater attention to this subject might have produced more satisfactory results, but I am doubtful of this.

In the old days, "wealth" was of two categories: (*a*) Prerogatives, tangible or intangible, which could be shown, pictorially or dramatically, or could be expounded in words; and (*b*) Goods which could be distributed for validating such prerogatives. Individual possessions, unsuited for distribution, were hardly considered as wealth; a sewing-machine, a bottle of whiskey, a bed, or some other luxury might give satisfaction to the owner, but did not increase his importance in the eyes of his fellows. The value of objects was only for their use in ceremonial distribution; indeed, prior to such distribution, they were only of potential value. This attitude controlled Bella Coola economics in the early days of contact, and still influences their behaviour. A native store-keeper once ruefully commented on the fact that he would gain no advantage from the goods on his shelves, since he hoped merely to sell them, not to give them away.

A man's relatives were expected to help him in the acquisition of goods, but the extent of their contributions was never

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
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standardized. Boys and girls helped their parents, and there was no definite age at which they ceased to do so. The fluidity of the Bella Coola system was contrary to any standardization. The more important a chief became, the more did he receive from dependent relatives, but the more did they expect in the way of "return presents." It was advantageous to be generous, within the family circle as well as without, since life was so public that every transaction even of a "private" nature, was well known. Unquestionably, a greedy and strong-minded individual must frequently have taken advantage of help from his housemates, but there was no strict code of ethics in regard to this. In brief, it may be said that the acquisition of wealth was an unstandardized, individual, matter; its distribution was likewise according to individual volition, although within a rigidly defined tribal pattern.

*Nusk*ᵘ Society

The ancestral names that chiefs desire to raise to a position of eminence are usually embodied in myths dealing with the first settlement of this earth, names which belong, as has been stated, to the ancestral family. Many of these traditions record other designations as well, each of which carries with it the prerogative of performing a type of dance known as *nusk*ᵘ. These will be spoken of, henceforth, as *nusk*ᵘ names. The Bella Coola do not know the meaning of this term. These names, like ancestral ones, are the potential property of members of the ancestral family, but can only be assumed when duly validated by presents. Such an assumption follows a period of seclusion in the back-room of the house. Both men and women are eligible. A person may be secluded in this way a number of times, acquiring a new *nusk*ᵘ name on each occasion, but as presents must be distributed every time, it follows that only the children or relatives of wealthy chiefs can be so favoured. It is desirable to have the bestowal of a *nusk*ᵘ name occur at a potlatch, since guests from foreign tribes are then

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
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Coola say that the return of the dead "washes away grief," and unquestionably it has a comforting effect on the mind of the donor of the potlatch. 556* 769

(3) Wealth. Unless a man has the necessary goods with which to make presents he cannot invite guests, no matter how important may be his ancestral myths and names. Some of this wealth he may be able to amass by his own labours, but unless he is assisted by his wife's family it is virtually impossible for him to succeed. The Bella Coola believe that a man cannot become a chief except through large payments made by a woman's family when they "rebuy" her from her husband. In other words, no man can succeed without the support of his wife. In choosing a mate a man is guided almost entirely by the ability of her family to give him financial support. In some cases an elderly couple assist a married son to give a potlatch; this custom, though considered quite proper, is not common. 476● 556* 602 [583] [622] [581]

(4) Supernatural assistance. To the Bella Coola this is quite as important as the preceding. One man may work very hard but his efforts are never crowned with success, whereas another man will prosper in every venture. This is due to the supernatural attributes given by the supreme god to the latter. By prayer, ceremonial chastity, and other means, a man may increase the powers granted to him, but if these are entirely lacking, he can never hope to rise to the position of chief. 556* 787

PRELIMINARIES

In describing the potlatch, it will be convenient to refer to the donor as X, and assume him to be a middle-aged member of the *nusa* society, whose seat and name, though duly ratified, lack importance through his previous failure to give large presents. 556*

For a number of years X has prospered. He has amassed quantities of skins, blankets, tools, copper ornaments, clothing, canoes, baskets, dentalium shell, slaves, and other valuables.

1:McIlwraith E-S (1922-1924) 1948
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performance of rites of this kind. But sociological and ethical concepts, shown at their highest development in the potlatch, are not limited to a few weeks of the year, or to any class of the community. Generosity on a large scale can be publicly displayed by chiefs alone, but to a lesser degree this virtue must be practised by everyone, since avarice is considered a major sin. Anyone who happens to pass a house in which a meal is taking place must be invited to share it; to do otherwise would be considered rude. The person summoned must take at least a trifle to show that he is not churlish and too proud to eat with his host, while if he is hungry, he shares whatever is being served as a matter of course. The head of the family should be the first to taste any wine" as proof that it is not poisoned, but otherwise he fares little, if any, better than his guests. This custom is now rapidly falling into disuse through the construction of individual family houses with doors and locks. The fisherman who has exclusive rights to a suitable place for netting olachen or salmon must give some of his catch to anyone who asks him. If he has landed four salmon, the first solicitor is given one, later comers, none at all. When a net is set in the river, anyone passing is allowed to raise it and take some of the contents; if there are two fish, he may remove one, if many, three or four. To take all would be a despicable theft, sufficient to brand the transgressor as greedy; hence public opinion prevents the system from being carried to excess. A hunter who brings back several mountain goats or other large game is expected to invite his neighbours to a feast, which virtually means that he must share his takings.

Presents of this kind increase the prestige of the donor who has thus acted in accordance with Bella Coola ethics, and are advantageous investments since others must reciprocate. The system is carried to such lengths that, until recent years, it was more profitable to give away goods than to sell them. In the case of a sale, the purchaser endeavours to give as little as possible, whereas the recipient of a gift returns as much as

"This is a modern practice, dating from the introduction of home-brew.

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

855 rebuked. They grow up in the open environment of the houses, absorbing more of their lore by watching and imitating than by actual instruction. Their care devolves chiefly on the mother, although at any ceremony the father will be seen arriving with the baby in his arms, while his wife leads another child. Nurses are unknown and the parents take their children with them on all occasions; if it is necessary for a mother to be absent on some arduous toil, her child will be entrusted to a grandmother or other elderly relative. There are no avoidances between the young people and their parents-in-law.

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The obligation of present-giving does not stop with the marriage ceremony. Whenever X gives a *kusiut* dance or other ceremony, Y's relatives are expected to contribute. It is felt that the weight of the presents given them during the period of engagement and at the wedding has become too heavy, and they throw this off by lavish giving. No count is kept of the value of gifts bestowed or received, though it is known that the family of the woman loses financially in the end. The father of many daughters is regarded as an unfortunate individual, who is always poor and overworked through the necessity of providing for them. By so doing, however, he increases his own prestige, and the Bella Coola have the happy sentiment that such a man manages to get along some way; perhaps necessity rouses his ambition. Likewise X's relatives contribute to any ritual carried out by Y's father. If, for example, one of his wife's relatives dies, X and his friends may wish to contribute towards the funeral expenses. In fact, any ceremonial serves as an excuse for relatives by marriage to donate goods and thus demonstrate publicly their influence, importance, and generosity.

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The concept of mutual help between families who have intermarried is one that lasts for generations. In 1922 there was in Bella Coola an old Kimsquit man who had left home some forty years earlier and had since lived in Smith Inlet where he married and had a boy. On the death of his wife, this

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
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old man came back to Bella Coola with his son, a man about twenty-five years of age. During his absence all his relatives had died, and he was forgotten. He went to the house of a man with whom his ancestors had intermarried generations ago, explained who he was, and was welcomed. The old man and his son have since lived there, although it is doubtful if the owner of the house had ever heard of their existence, and the son cannot even speak the Bella Coola language. 602 476

X and Y themselves are not entirely overlooked in the exchange of presents between their two families. If Y's father is well pleased with his son-in-law he may show this not only publicly, which redounds to his own credit, but by the communication of secret lore such as a special number of nights for ceremonial chastity. Conversely, if Y should not be a *hamats'*, her father-in-law often asks her father's permission to make her a member of that society. The woman's father is naturally pleased and makes no objections; so she is initiated, using a name and prerogative embodied in her husband's family. Commonly too, they give her one of their ancestral names at any convenient ceremony later than the wedding. In conformity with the rules already explained, if Y should die childless the names return to X's relatives, but if there are children they pass to them. It is said that *nemé* names can never be transferred in this manner. 606 491 425 [715] [575] [553] [575]

Y's father and other relatives continue to take an interest in her ceremonial welfare and in her personal comfort. If X beats or otherwise abuses her, they expostulate; and if his cruelty becomes unbearable they shelter their daughter when she runs away from her husband. If X should murder Y, she would be revenged by her family. Only one instance of this was known, when the murderer avoided his pursuers by fleeing from the country. As a rule a wife is fairly well treated, though this depends on the character of the husband, the importance of her relatives, and the amount of goods expended to validate the marriage. Among slaves and persons of no influence, it is assumed that a husband may sell his wife as a 593 [602] [627] [527] [432] [448]

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APPENDIX A

MECHANICAL PROCESSES

No attempt was made to study either the material culture of the Bella Coola, or their methods of manufacturing, but information on some points was obtained incidentally. All sociological and religious features connected therewith have already been described.

THE TAKING AND PREPARATION OF OLACHEN

The run of olachen, *ejuq*, comes about the end of April, and as many as possible are caught. In preparation, nets, *ala'c'i*, are brought out from the house where they have been stored during the winter, examined and repaired. If necessary, new ones must be manufactured out of nettle-(*lma-*) fibre laid away by the women for this purpose. By rolling the material on their legs, they produce a thin twine, two strands of this are then interwoven, making a finished cord capable of resisting great strain. The nets are constructed by the men. The type used at the present time, which is said not to differ from that formerly employed, consists of a purse-like sack, oval in cross-section, open at the wider end and tapering very gradually to the other, which is closed. The usual length is about thirty feet, the diameter at the open end about eight feet, and at the closed end about three feet. A new net is dipped in a mixture of boiled hemlock-bark to darken it, and then boiled in a solution of willow-bark to prevent the knots from slipping.

The setting out of a net is not an easy task, as two or three men agree to work as partners. In the present degenerate days, property rights are not respected and each group selects a suitable spot. The best location is where the water is about three feet deep and runs rapidly, but without ripples, over a smooth piece of the bottom; such a place is called a *skitsa*. When the fish begin to run plentifully, the partners paddle out to set their net, taking with them four stakes, each about ten feet in length. The weight of a full net is tremendous, as the poles have to be driven down at least six feet, a difficult task on account of the stony bottom. Selecting the exact spot, one of four posts, *sklajaiks*, is set upright and held in position by being tied to a cross-piece, *mal'qaxts*, fastened on the canoe for the purpose. While his two partners hold the craft steady, the third man begins to pound down the stake; metal mauls are now commonly used, but in former times this work was always done with an unhafted stone maul, *k'emtsis*. The fishermen advance one another conveniently until the top of the pole has been driven down to within

[illegible] rushes, wood and oil cans are found convenient for this purpose and have almost replaced wooden boxes. After repeated stirrings and skimmings, all that remains is a mass of putrid fish, bearing no resemblance whatever to the fish from which it came. The Bella Coola are said to consume this rot when fat for eating, but the Bella Coola throw it away. Some cooks boil out the dregs by hand, but many of the less fastidious have a long hole in the bottom which, when opened, allows the semi-liquid contents to flow out into a rough trough leading to the river. As soon as one batch of chicken fat has thus been disposed of, another is boiled and refined in the same way. The grease keeps indefinitely and is a useful article of barter with the Carriers as well as a staple of Bella Coola diet. Although the preparation removes much of its offensive odour, chicken grease has an unpleasant taste to the white man.

During the boiling, all other activities are suspended and the people spend practically all their time on the river bank. If the fish are allowed to cook too long, much of the grease is lost, so men, women, and children are pressed into service to make the most of the short period. The men rise at dawn to scan the fires on the bank, the women and children follow with food, and for several days the whole village camps, as if on a picnic, amid an indescribable din until the almost solitary anyone passing within hundreds of yards. There are tasks for everyone; the fish must be carried from the pits to the furnaces, wood must be brought, the fires cooked, the bottles filled, the grease carried away, the fireplaces repaired, food cooked, and a hundred other chores. It is a scene of great activity, carried on with good humour and merriment, for the Bella Coola realize that they are storing up luxuries for the following winter. Even the dogs seem to share the general excitement, and do not hesitate to eat the dregs from the bottles, which, when emptied into the river, attract numerous crows and gulls, to the joy of small boys with hunting desires.

BELLA COOLA CANOES

Although wood and transport by water is still as vital to the Bella Coola as it was in their fathers, the motor boat is fast replacing the canoe, and the science of manufacturing their own craft is being lost. In former times several types were constructed, but only one of these is still employed—the ocean canoe, or *ala*, used on rivers (see Plate 21). These vary from seventy to thirty feet in length, and are about four feet wide; they are seldom built, and there is no difference between the bow and stern. Although one man can handle such a craft in smooth water, at least two are required for a journey of any length, and four is the usual crew. The captain, who is either the best waterman or the one most familiar with the route, stands in the stern, the second to command is